

THE

Case of Mr. John Griffith

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Minister of the Gospel, and now Prisoner in Newgate.

Being a true and Impartial Account of what he spake at the *Sessions-house* in the *Old Bailey*, on the 18th day of this instant *April*, 1683. before the Lord-Chief-Justice *Saunders*, and three Judges more, the Lord Mayor, Recorder, and several Aldermen of the City of *London*.

ON the day and year abovesaid, about four in the Afternoon, Mr. *Bampfild*, and my self were sent for by the Court, and soon after we came we were both brought to the inward Bar.

Mr. *Bampfild* was first required to take the *Oath of Allegiance*, it being again tendered him according to the Statute in the third of King *James*.

After some discourse between the Judges and the Recorder, had with Mr. *Bampfild*, he refusing to swear, they made an end for that time with him. The Clerk of the Peace I took him to be, said unto me, Take off your Glove; I asked him, *What to do?* he answered, *To lay your hand on the Book*, which Book he had in his hand, and held it out unto me.

I then spake with a loud voice, and said, My Lord, I hope you will give me the Liberty to speak for my self in my own defence; one of the Judges replied, That my friend (meaning Mr. *Bampfild*) had spoke for me, or to that effect. I said again that I desired to speak for my self, for I had other things to offer as my reasons why I could not take that Oath. Having Liberty granted, as I took it from their silence, I with an audible voice said unto them, I am in the Scripture commanded when I take an Oath, *To swear in Truth, in Judgment, and in Righteousness*, unto which the Church of *England* doth agree; it is one Article of their Faith, That he that taketh an Oath, being required of the Magistrate, ought to swear, so he do it *in Truth, in Righteousness, and in Judgment*. (See Article 39. of the Church of *England*.)

Now for me to swear, as my duty is according to the Scripture, and as the Church of *England* directs, I cannot, should I take this Oath, because I cannot know, but must be ignorant of, what I bind my Soul to perform, and then it is impossible I should swear *in Truth, in Judgment, and in Righteousness*.

I cannot know, but must be ignorant, both of what hereafter by Law I may be required to do, and also to whom I swear to be obedient; for it is not possible I should foresee what Laws may hereafter be made; and I do not only bind my Soul to obey the King that now is, but his Heirs and Successors also; and I know not what his Successor may be, for ought I know he may be a Popish Successor, or a Papist, and I cannot swear to obey Laws not yet in being, nor to be obedient to a Popish Successor; therefore I cannot take the Oath of Allegiance.

Upon

Upon which words there was a Hum in the Court which being ceased after a little pause, one of the Judges made this short reply, I (saith he) *doth the stick lie there?*

I then went on, and said, I cannot conform to the Church of *England*; should I take this Oath, I swear to Conform, for I am bound by an Oath to obey all the Kings Laws, as much those Laws which respect the VVorship of God, as those relating to Civil Government, and then I am sworn to hear Common prayer once a month, (here one of the Judges said, *So you are*) and to Receive the Sacrament with the Church of *England* as oft as the Law requires, yea and to Conform to all the Rites and Ceremonies of the said Church; to this it was answered, (*So you are*) and not to frequent Private Meetings any more, for there are Laws that forbid it; it was again answered, *So you are*.

Therefore I cannot take this Oath.

I then pray'd the Judges to give me all their opinions, whether it were as I had said or not. they answered with one consent, as one man, That it was as I had said, *viz.* That I did in taking the Oath, swear to obey all the Kings Laws without exception. Then I returned them thanks, that they were pleased to give me their opinion and judgment in the Case, and withal added these words, I am well satisfied and settled in my Religion, and the more confirmed by what you have said; and if it be so, do with me what you please, come life, come death, the Lord assisting me, I will never take the Oath of Allegiance.

Then I desired to speak a few Words more, which being not denyed, I said Be it known unto you, that I do not refuse to take the Oath of Allegiance, in any dislike I have of any thing contained therein, against the Authority of the Pope, or the See of *Rome*, but do in all points therein with you agree; and further I do declare, that I believe the Pope hath no Power, nor Authority over the Kings Person, nor his Government, no, nor over the meanest Subject in his Kingdom; and do yet further declare, That I believe in my Conscience, Popery to be Idolatrous, Damnable, and Devilish.

I was then had back again to the *Press-yard*, where I remain the Lords Prisoner, and am ready further to bear my Testimony for him, against Anti-christ, the Pope, and See of *Rome*, and for his holy Word, the Purity of the Gospel, and the Ordinances thereof, against Popish Darknes, filthy Idolatries, Fornications, Blasphemies, and Abominations, and all Traditions of men, as one made willing through the free mercy and rich Grace of God, my heavenly Father, to forsake all for Christ, (who hath loved me, and given himself for me) not counting my life dear to my self, so I may finish my Course with Joy, and the Ministry I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God.

Thus have I given an Account of what I spake, and was said to me, to the very best of my memory, though it may be not word for word, yet for substance of what was spoke, it is true.

JOHN GRIFFITH

Thou shalt not forswear thy self, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine Oaths
Mat. 5. 23.

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